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MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1932

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VERGIL AND EPICUREANISM¹

Vergil's arrival in Rome chanced to coincide with the final impact of Greek culture upon his native land. This culture had arrived by instalments, first Homer and the epic, then tragedy and comedy, followed by history and philosophy, and, lastly, Alexandrinism. For a long time the foreign literature was greeted without apprehension of danger. The *Odyssey* of Livius Andronicus must have seemed a harmless text-book for Roman boys. Greek tragedy with its aristocratic wisdom and moral severity may well have gratified the ethical predilections of the dominant nobility. It was not until the time of the Elder Cato that the vogue of comedy with its vulgar ethics and of rhetoric with its shifty logic caused a warning note to be sounded. The acute sense of Cato clearly discerned that under the smart polish of Hellenic culture lay a pernicious danger to Roman morals, nor was he a false prophet when he declared that Rome would perish when once the whole literature of Greece had been mastered¹⁰. The two systems would not mix.

In Vergil's student days the tremors of impending revolution had already thoroughly shaken the foundations of society. When he finished the *Georgics*, the revolution was an accomplished fact. It may have been the intention of Augustus that the Empire should seem to be a Periclean democracy dominated by one outstanding citizen, the *princeps*, and in a sense this view was not unjust. To the common man the Empire was far more serviceable than exclusive republicanism had ever been, but the underlying principles of the Empire were not democratic. The actual basis of the Principate was that of Hellenistic kingship, and it is none other than Vergil who plainly states that fact for us, in *Georgics* 4.559-561:

... Caesar dum magnus ad altum
fulminat Euphraten bello, victorque volentes
per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo.

In these verses we behold no real democracy broad-based upon the people's will, but a benevolent despot enthroned by force of arms and consecrated by divine approval, dispensing laws to consenting subjects, and destined to find his place at last among the stars. The divine child announced in the Messianic Eclogue has arrived. He is the νόμος ἐμψυχος, the *lex animata*, the animate law, the word made flesh and dwelling among men².

It goes without saying that this benevolent Hellenistic despotism could never have raised its head in

Italy unless religious and ethical changes had marched in step with the political revolution. Paradoxical as it may seem, it was the aristocratic reactionary Cornelius Sulla that gave to the religious revolution its first powerful impulse. He was a political gambler, something which no Roman of the old school could ever have been. In Greece he adopted the title Epaphroditus, 'Favorite of Venus', but it was less the goddess of love than the goddess of the dice, the Venus throw, the lucky cast, that appealed to the dictator, for he alternated Epaphroditus with Eutyches, 'Lucky'³. The latter epithet he translated into Latin as *Felix*, and, to spread the good luck, he called his son Faustus and his daughter Fausta. This publicity extended the meaning of the adjective *felix* and gave it a great vogue, a fact which accounts in part for the prevalence of its contrary *infelix* in Vergil's *Aeneid*. It was Sulla who gave to his generation its first lessons in the gospel of *felicitas* and *infelicitas*.

Sulla's successor in the popular limelight was Pompey. Beginning his career as the favorite of the grim dictator he graduated as the darling of the people. That it was Venus whom he chose to honor with the gift of a magnificent temple is no accident. He was perpetuating the tradition of Sulla; all his life he suffered from recurrent attacks of 'Sullaturitis'⁴. Pompey's successor was Julius Caesar, who scored a crushing victory over his predecessors. They had claimed Venus as their patroness; he declared her to be his ancestress, and founded in her honor the Temple of Venus Genetrix, not in the Campus Martius, but in the Forum itself, close to the heart of Rome. It is this Venus of Julius Caesar, the mother of the Aeneadae, and not the Venus of Pompey and Sulla, that Vergil glorifies in the *Aeneid*. Nevertheless this new vogue of Venus was not unconnected with the belief in *felicitas*.

On a second count also the dead Sulla was bested by the master strategist Julius Caesar. Along with Venus, goddess of the lucky cast, dame Fortune had been coming into prominence. Her popularity was new, though her temples were old. Across the Tiber in a district surrounded by slums was her most sacred shrine. Caesar conceived the plan of buying up these slums and constructing there his famous gardens. Thus the goddess became his client, as it were, and he her patron. She resided on his premises. There on holy days he used to sit in state and receive the multitudes. It is very fitting, therefore, that Fortuna should be featured in *Aeneid* 5. It is she that guides Aeneas to the tomb of Anchises, and the picture of Aeneas moving among the crowds⁵ upon that occasion may remind us of Caesar receiving the people in his gardens. Moreover, the anniversary of the goddess fell on a mid-

¹This paper was read at a meeting of The New York Classical Club, in November, 1930. C. K. >

²Plutarch, Cato the Censor 23.

³See an article entitled The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship, by Erwin R. Goodenough, in Yale Classical Studies, Volume One, 55-102. <For this book see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 24:139-141. For Professor Goodenough's article see there page 140. C. K. >

⁴Plutarch, Sulla 34.

⁵Cicero, Ad Atticum 9.10.6.

⁵Aeneid 5.22-23, 286-290.

summer day, June 24, a fact which is expressly mentioned in Aeneid 5. 626: *Septima post Troiae excidium iam vertitur aestas*⁸. Lastly, it must not be forgotten that this day was celebrated at Rome by boat-races on the Tiber⁹.

This religious revolution that brought female gods of chance to the front rank, and actually reduced an old virile god like Mars to a mere figure of speech was accompanied and corroborated by an Oriental influence, astrology. The doctrine that the destinies of men and nations are ruled by the stars arrived in Italy as early as the time of the Elder Cato¹⁰, but it made slow headway. Its astral fatalism strongly resembled the cosmic fatalism of the Stoics, but Scipio's Stoic friend Panaetius stubbornly rejected the alliance¹¹. Not so the Stoic Posidonius, who came to Rome in 51 B. C. in Vergil's student days. He combined the two fatalisms and launched the combination into orthodoxy¹². This added to the word *felix* still another meaning, namely, 'born under a lucky star', and so we are not astonished to find that Dido is *infelix*, 'ill-starred'. She calls upon the stars that are privy to her doom¹³. At the same time Venus assumed a new rôle; she became a beneficent star. Varro declared that she guided Aeneas from Troy to Lavinium, and Servius informs us that Lucifer, the morning star, that guided the refugees from burning Troy to their trysting place, was none other than Venus¹⁴.

To this impact of astral fatalism was added another, equally emphatic and far more fruitful for both literature and politics, namely, a fresh invasion of Sibylline Oracles. These, too, were born of the inexhaustible imagination of the ancient East, partly Egyptian, partly Jewish, partly Greek. Like astrology they made headway slowly. They influenced Cornelius Lentulus to join the conspiracy of Catiline¹⁵; a suitable specimen was either discovered or concocted to prevent the appointment of Pompey as commissioner to restore the exiled Ptolemy to the throne of Egypt¹⁶; by still another the idea was launched in the interests of Julius Caesar that none but a king could conquer Parthia¹⁷. From such examples it may be inferred that these oracles dealt with political concerns and might even take a world view of affairs, but their supreme importance lies in this, that they brought to Rome the Hellenistic theory of kingship. This theory is implicit in the Messianic Eclogue and it is explicit in the lines of the Fourth Georgic quoted above. At the same time, however, it was a two-edged sword, and might favor Antony as well as Octavianus. It was, therefore, a necessary measure of safety before the conflict of Actium that Octavianus should order all collections of Sibylline Oracles in private possession to be surrendered and burned in public¹⁸.

The literary importance of the Sibylline oracles consisted in this, that they made a boundless appeal, fed

the universal appetite of the multitude for things mysterious, and held out tempting baits for the inveterate hopefulness of mankind. At the same time they invited a world view of affairs, and furnished a technique of prophecy. Join to these a matchless sublimity of tone, magnificence of language, and a novel and delightful range of imagery. All these qualities, though now staled by the repetitions of many centuries, were novelties then in ancient Italy. They were unknown to Cicero, or, if they were not quite unknown, were to him completely meaningless or even shocking. In his writings the phraseology of imperialism is entirely undeveloped. In Vergil's earliest poems it is full blown, and, although entirely exotic, has begun to strike deep roots in the minds of men.

Sibylline Prophecies, however, Hellenistic theories of kingship, astral fatalism, Stoic cosmology, and new activities of native gods do not exhaust the contemporary sources of Vergil's thought. All these phases of philosophic or religious determinism seem to have captured the imagination of contemporary Italy in much the same way that evolutionary theories of science and politics have penetrated our own. Yet there was a contrary influence of supreme importance to Vergil, namely, Epicureanism. Like all Greek thought it was slow in coming to Rome. Originating in Athens, it spread eastward and in the end reached Rome from Asia in the same manner as Stoicism. Philodemus, its foremost representative in Rome, and possibly a friend of Vergil, hailed from Gadara, within cannon-shot of Nazareth¹⁹. Before this time the essays of Epicurus had been translated into bad Latin by one Amafinius²⁰. He seems to have stolen a march upon Italian teachers of Stoicism, who left their philosophy in the Greek language. At any rate the new creed swept the country; in 56 B. C. Cicero reluctantly admits that a modified Epicureanism was almost the only philosophy then being taught in Rome²¹.

This date, 56 B. C., is of supreme importance for our understanding of Roman Epicureanism and our knowledge of Vergil. It is the date of the trial of Caelius charged with conspiracy against Clodia or Lesbia. The excesses of Caelius are excused by Cicero upon the ground that almost no philosophy except *voluptas cum dignitate* was then being preached in the capital. Manifestly this marks the peak of the vogue of Epicureanism. Here we have a deep-set boundary mark. We may say with certainty that Vergil, arriving in Rome a few years afterwards, spent his student days in an atmosphere distinctly Epicurean. It is possible to go farther. The Stoic Posidonius began to teach in Rome in 51 B. C.²², and the beginning of the reaction against Epicureanism probably set in at once. Cicero devoted the last two years of his life to the pleasant task of demolishing its doctrines. Thus the young Vergil lived in the midst of controversy; this divided world, it will be found, divided the allegiance of his thought. He was a divided genius.

It would ease the discussion at this point if we could

⁸The summer is 'on the turn' (*vertitur*) on June 24.

⁹Ovid, *Fasti* 6.775-784. ¹⁰De Agricultura 1.5.4.

¹¹Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.99.

¹²St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 5.2; Garrod, *Manili Astronomicum Liber 2, lxxi-xxix* (Oxford University Press, 1911).

¹³Aeneid 4.519-520. ¹⁴Servius on Aeneid 2.801.

¹⁵Cicero, *In Catilinam* 3.9. ¹⁶Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 1.7.4.

¹⁷Suetonius, *Julius* 79. ¹⁸Suetonius, *Augustus* 31.

¹⁹Strabo 16.29 (page 1101, in Meinecke's edition).

²⁰Cicero, *Academica* 1.6; *Tusculanae Disputationes* 4.6-7.

²¹*Pro Caelio* 41. ²²*Suidas* 3055 A (Gaiford).

say that Vergil fell under the spell of Lucretius. Unfortunately I have come to believe that he was never attracted powerfully either by his language or by his thought. Professor W. A. Merrill, of the University of California, collected the verbal similarities with great care, and the result is negative²¹. Abundant evidence presents itself to show that Vergil was familiar with Lucretian verse, but the reader is driven at the same time to recognize that the two poems march to different music. Vergil's verses move onward with the long and easy stride of veteran soldiers facing a long journey. The verses of Lucretius display a certain uneasy vigor, as of troops that are continually storming breastworks. The words of Vergil fall into their places like the chorus in a play. The words of Lucretius are like minute men, abounding in spirit and courage but unduly excited by the sound of the bugles and the drums.

The few similarities of thought that may be found were collected long ago, and may be read in Sellar's *Virgil*, padded out as only Sellar knew how to pad²².

The assumption that Vergil at some time fell under the spell of Lucretius is rendered further improbable by a known fact. He certainly fell under the spell of the Epicurean Siro. This was the only teacher whom the poet saw fit to mention by name in any work of his that is extant. Several other teachers he must have had, in Cremona, Milan, Rome, and perhaps Naples, but in our literature they remain as shades without number or name. Only Epidius is known to us from an alien tradition²³. Siro, on the other hand, is hailed in *Catalepton* 5 with the epithet *magnus*, as if he were equal to Alexander or to Caesar. Hero-worship, of course, is characteristic of Epicureanism, and, if Lucretius salutes Epicurus as a god²⁴, we need not be shocked to find that Vergil sets his beloved Siro upon the pedestal of greatness. On the contrary, if we fail to recognize this fact, we are losing an opportunity to gain the best possible understanding of Vergil's disposition, career, and development.

I venture to read a version of *Catalepton* 5 because it differs in some particulars from published translations:

'Away with you, empty bag-pipes of the rhetoricians, away with you, verbiage puffed up, but not with dew of Attica, and with you, too, Silius, and <your brother> Silius, Tarquinius and Varro, a tribe of bookworms dripping with dulness; away with you, clashing cymbals of egotistic youth, and with you too, Sextus Sabinus, abomination of my abominations; dandies of the Forum, farewell.

We are setting sail to the happy havens, seeking the instruction of Siro, that great man, and we have ransomed life from every care.

Away with you, you muses. Yes, I mean what I say, sweet muses. But—the truth I shall confess—you were dear; and, so, after all, revisit my pages, though chastely and rarely'.

It need hardly be mentioned here that Epicureans were adjured to eschew all learning, and rhetoric in

particular. Vergil displays the enthusiasm of the young convert.

For various reasons I should place this departure of the poet from Rome in 45 B. C., or thereabouts. The best general evidence for date is this, that between the triumph of Julius Caesar in 46 and the murder of Caesar in 44 there occurred such a general exodus from the capital that the dictator had a law passed to prevent it; no young man of good family was to absent himself from Rome for more than three years unless he was engaged in the public service²⁵. As examples of this exodus it is possible to mention the cases of Cicero's son, Valerius Messalla, and the poet Horace, and it may be recalled that Brutus visited Athens, on his way east in 44, doubtless to find recruits²⁶. Moreover, in the interval 46-44 the *collegia* were once more disbanded by Caesar²⁷. That Epicurean brotherhoods fell under this ban is extremely probable, just as the Christians were prosecuted under a similar law at a later time²⁸. It is to be remembered also that Caesar's sumptuary laws must have fallen heavily upon Epicureans of a less philosophic type, who may have found a more congenial atmosphere in Naples. Certain it is, at any rate, that Vergil left Rome, probably following Siro and the rest of his school. Here I should locate the period of his life mentioned by the grammarian Probus, who wrote that 'Vergil spent a number of years in cultured leisure following the sect of Epicurus, enjoying exceptional intimacy and mutual understanding with Quintilius, Tucca, and Varius'²⁹.

Nevertheless, even if doubts may linger in the minds of some concerning the date of Vergil's departure, at least it can hardly be denied that the occasion of his departure was his conversion to Epicureanism. To appreciate fully what this signified we must recall that Epicureanism was the only evangelical philosophy of the time³⁰. The door of admission was the experience of conversion. Conversion, it may be interjected, meant a right-about-face in the conduct of life. The neophyte turned his back upon the pursuit of riches, fame, and power, and devoted himself to the pursuit of tranquillity. He renounced such food of vanity as rhetoric and mathematics just as a follower of a modern sect might renounce dancing, card-playing, and strong drink. He set himself to cultivate plain virtues such as brotherly love, charity, agreeableness, and honesty of speech. The secret of happiness lay in the feelings, not in external things.

The evangelical character of Epicureanism is evidenced by an extant saying of the founder himself, and the same brief paragraph calls attention at the same time to its humor, thrift, and domestic tendency³¹: 'Laugh while you philosophize, take care of your property, perform your duties to your family, and

²¹Suetonius, *Julius* 42.

²²Plutarch, *Brutus* 24; Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 12.32.2; Horace, *Epistulae* 2.2.43-49.

²³Suetonius, *Julius* 43. ²⁴Pliny, *Epistulae* 10.96.8.

²⁵Diehl 43.

²⁶The most sympathetic account of Epicureanism is by William Wallace (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1880). The volume entitled *Epicurus, Text, Translation, and Notes*, by Cyril Bailey (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1926), is authoritative for the extant remains of Epicurean philosophy. Stoic and Epicurean, by Robert Drew Hicks (New York, Scribner's, 1910), is a brief treatment. ²⁷*Gnomologium Vaticanum* 41.

²⁸University of California Publications in Classical Philology, 3 (1918), 135-247. ²⁹Chapter 6, pages 199-269.

³⁰*Vita Bernensis Vergili*, in Diehl 44. (This and like references below are to the very useful booklet, *Die Vitae Vergilianae*, by Ernst Diehl [Bonn, Marcus and Weber, 1911]. The references are to pages, or to pages and paragraphs). ³¹5.19.

never cease to proclaim the doctrines of the true philosophy'. This campaign of evangelism was at its height in Vergil's student days. I quoted Cicero to the effect that almost nothing else was being taught in 56 B. C. In 53, Trebatius was converted to Epicureanism in Caesar's camp in Gaul³². Torquatus advocates the doctrine of pleasure in Cicero's *De Finibus*, of which the fictive date is 50³³. Cassius is known to have become an adherent as early as 45³⁴. In this epoch fall the letters of Cicero to the Epicurean Papirius Paetus³⁵. In the latter part of this epoch Horace was probably listening to lectures on Epicureanism in Athens³⁶. The two consuls of 43, Hirtius and Pansa, were both adherents of Epicurus³⁷. Cicero bombarded the sect during the last two years of his life, a fact which confirms our assumption that it was strong in numbers.

It is my opinion that in this campaign of evangelism the physical theories of Epicurus, which so captivated Lucretius, played no part. Cicero himself virtually ignores Lucretius, which he could hardly have done if his influence had bulked large. In my opinion it was the ethical teachings of Epicurus that interested Roman society in the days of Vergil. These ethical teachings, which were incidentals to Lucretius, became the fundamentals to Horace, Varius, Tucca, Quintilius Varus, and a nameless multitude of other disciples.

It is possible that the smartest blow delivered by Cicero against the sect is the *De Amicitia*. The central doctrine of the practical ethics of Epicurus was 'love', and this was beyond doubt rendered in Latin by *amicitia*. The sound sense of the Roman led him to reject the word *amor* on account of its troublesome romantic associations. The choice of *amicitia*, however, could not fail to modify to a certain degree one of the principal doctrines of Epicurus on Latin soil, and so Roman Epicureanism became primarily a cult of friendship. Cicero mentions congregations of Epicureans as assembling in his own day. I believe that these may have been disbanded by Caesar's law concerning *collegia*, which was aimed expressly at those which had been recently founded³⁸. I referred to this already as one of the reasons for placing Vergil's departure from Rome in the year 45. In conclusion it is timely to state that the resident teacher of Epicureanism, Philodemus, published essays on such topics as Anger, Free-speaking, and Vices and their Corresponding Virtues³⁹. This invites us to infer that the ethics of Epicurus were being recast to suit the needs of the Roman public.

Leaving this suggestion to ferment by itself, if it will ferment, we return to the slyest of all Cicero's

essays, the *De Amicitia*. This was written in 44, when, we believe, the whole Epicurean colony was being upset by Caesar's sumptuary laws and by his restrictive measures against *collegia* and brotherhoods. The essay is more of a polemic than it appears to be. The crafty old pleader is thinking not only of the contemporary reader but also of the invisible audience of posterity. He is broadcasting over a wide network and knows it well. Nevertheless the situation he attacks is purely contemporary. He marshals all his veteran persuasiveness to rob the good-natured Epicurean of his central doctrine of friendship and to vindicate it for the virtuous man of any school. He endeavors to demonstrate that friendship is a corollary of virtue, and that only the good can be friends⁴⁰. This is absurd because the virtuous are often friendless, while rogues abound in friends. At the same time his plea is profoundly flattering to saints and hypocrites alike, and it comes to posterity as one of the sweetest utterances of the eloquent old advocate. He drew the wool over the eyes of the jury of readers, as he had drawn it so many times over the eyes of juries in the courts.

The years preceding the murder of Julius Caesar were very adverse to the Epicureans. While Cicero was assailing their doctrines by his pen, Caesar was pinching their liberties by his laws. At the same time the new Stoicism, merged with Chaldean astrology, was fast rising into favor in high places. The greatest disaster to Epicureanism, however, was the programme of the Triumvirate of Antony, Lepidus, and Octavianus. Their inevitable policy of ruthlessness threatened to annihilate the philosophy of friendliness. At court that philosophy never learned to feel quite at home. Octavianus was not a man of friends. He aroused fear and he commanded respect, but he could not gain love. He won worship, but rarely from those near him. The philosophic basis of the principate is that of Hellenistic kingship, a man-god giving laws to willing peoples, and it is so that Vergil describes Augustus. In its remotest origin this doctrine of kingship harks back to the philosopher-kings of Plato, but it came down by a long circuitous route through the composite sources of the Messianic Eclogue. Vergil's attitude toward Caesar is that of a courtier of Antioch or Alexandria. So strange a medley is he of the East and the West.

The truth is that our *logos* has led us straight into a great paradox in the literary history of Rome, the inhumanity of the young Octavianus and the humanity of his court. Nothing could exceed the cruelty of the First Triumvirate. Nothing could surpass the refinement of the Eclogues that were being penned in the very year that Roman blood was flowing like water on the dark and bloody ground of Perugia. If we ask ourselves the solution of this paradox, the answer is to be found, I believe, in this, that the humane spirit of late republican Epicureanism survived into the Augustan period through the protection of Maecenas. He it was that performed the priceless functions of

³²Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 7.12.1.

³³See 2.74; Torquatus was then praetor.

³⁴Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 15.16.1.

³⁵Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 9.15-26.

³⁶Horace, *Epistulae* 2.2.43-50.

³⁷For Pansa see Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 15.10.3. His friend Hirtius was famous for his dinners: Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 12.2.

³⁸*De Finibus* 1.65; Suetonius, *Iulius* 42 *Cuncta collegia, praeter antiquitus constituta, distraxit*.

³⁹Philodemus's work *De Ira* was edited by Carl Wilke (Leipzig, Teubner, 1914), his *Ἡπὶ ἡδονῆς* by Alexander Olivieri (Leipzig, Teubner, 1914), and his *Ἡπὶ καλῶν* by Christian Jensen (Leipzig, Teubner, 1911).

⁴⁰See §18.

patron of poets and historians until the still unregenerate Octavianus came to recognize the inestimable value of literature to the new order. It was only after his return from the East after the Battle of Actium that Octavianus opened his house to the poets with imperial and understanding cordiality. By this time much of the so-called Augustan literature had been written.

Horace was not a charter member of this group. His goodness and worth were vouched for by Vergil and Varius⁴¹. The introduction of Horace to Maecenas could not have taken place before the close of the confiscations in 40 B. C., for two reasons⁴². First, we are distinctly told that Vergil was only slightly known to Maecenas until Maecenas came to his rescue during a dispute with a soldier over his lands⁴³; secondly, Maecenas has no part in the Eclogues, which are dedicated to Pollio, Alfenus Varus, and Cornelius Gallus. Maecenas succeeded these friends as Vergil's patron during the ensuing decade. The Georgics are dedicated to him. Horace becomes the social secretary of the new circle, cementing its friendships by his *Sermones*, *Carmina*, and *Epistulae*. It is from his poems that we are chiefly enabled to list the personnel of the circle of Maecenas and Augustus. A true Epicurean in this respect, as in some others, he took upon himself the task of keeping its friendships in repair. In all Latin literature this is the only period characterized by systematic friendship. To this feature the *humanitas* of the epoch is largely due.

Epicureans placed the claims of friendship higher than political convictions. Horace openly honors a certain Pompeius although he had fought against the Triumvirs⁴⁴. Gaius Matius tells us distinctly that he followed Julius Caesar as a friend, although he disapproved the Civil War; he aided Octavianus in celebrating the funeral of his adoptive father in spite of the denunciation of republican partisans⁴⁵. Atticus, in spite of his friendship for Cicero, befriended the family of Antony⁴⁶. He was simultaneously the confidant of Octavianus and Antony until the time of his death shortly before the Battle of Actium⁴⁷. Of Vergil we have similar testimony from Asconius Pedianus⁴⁸: 'He found fault with no one, praised those who deserved it, and was so kindly of heart that every one not only liked him but loved him, unless he was some perverse person. . . . Wherefore he had all poets of his own age so attached to him that they regarded him with affection, although they burned with envy of one another'.

In treating Epicurean friendship we must mention a quality alien to the old Roman character, namely, *suavitas*. That this was a topic much to the fore in Vergil's time is evidenced by various facts. The learned Varro wrote an essay entitled *De Suavitate*⁴⁹.

⁴¹Horace, *Sermones* 1.6.54-55.

⁴²a) Horace himself gives pretty clear evidence concerning the date of his introduction to Maecenas: see *Sermones* 2.6.40-46, and the fine discussion of this passage by E. C. Wickham, in *Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera Omnia: The Works of Horace with a Commentary*, 2.2-4 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1891). Wickham fixes the date of the Introduction in the spring of 38 B. C. C. K. >.

⁴³Diehl 14.

⁴⁴*Carmina* 2.7.

⁴⁵Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 11.28.2, 6. ⁴⁶Nepos, *Atticus* 9.2-3.

⁴⁷*Ibidem*, 20.

⁴⁸Diehl 35.

⁴⁹This title was needlessly changed by Ritschl to *De Sua Vita*; see Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur*, Part 1, § 183 (page 556).

Cicero had accorded to the topic brief mention in the *De Amicitia*, where he defines it as 'an agreeableness of speech and manners'. He opposes it to Roman gloom, sternness, and dignity, *tristitia*, *severitas*, and *gravitas*, and he advocates an abatement of these qualities for friendship's sake⁵⁰. This judgment of Cicero may fairly be viewed as a grudging concession to the new Epicurean *humanitas*. Of Atticus it is recorded by Cornelius Nepos that his *suavitas* was extraordinary; the biographer goes out of his way to insist that this trait was natural to him, which tempts us to infer *ex contrario* that others ascribed it to his Epicurean training⁵¹. Lastly, it may be added that *suavis* is a favorite word of Lucretius, who speaks of the 'sweet friendship' of Memmius⁵².

That Vergil deliberately cultivated agreeableness of voice is suggested by two seemingly contradictory statements recorded by Suetonius. On the authority of Melissus, Suetonius informs us that the poet was exceedingly slow of speech and almost like an uneducated person⁵³. If we may explain this by a statement of Cicero that rustics spoke slowly and staccato, distending the syllables, we may imagine Vergil as speaking in that way⁵⁴. Yet Suetonius quotes the statement of the poet Julius Montanus, preserved by Seneca, to the effect that 'he would steal some of Vergil's charm if he could only steal his voice, expression, and delivery, for verses which, when he recited them sounded musical, without his voice seemed flat and meaningless'⁵⁵. It is thus manifest that the poet who recited the Georgics and the Aeneid to the court of Augustus was a more accomplished person than the man who many years before had stumbled through one case in court.

This Epicurean *suavitas*, however, is of less consequence than Epicurean *candor*. We might reasonably infer that Epicurus advocated *candor* because Cicero⁵⁶ informs us that Epicurus condemned irony, which is its opposite. But we are not altogether dependent upon this scrap of evidence. Friendship as an ethical topic belongs to the Epicureans. The chief literature of friendship was Epicurean, and Cicero could hardly have failed in his *De Amicitia* to draw his headings from their treatises. Now, to *candor* he devotes no less than three chapters, 24-26, converting the discussion into Roman terms with Latin quotations and examples. As a matter of fact, by ignoring his sources he generalized the treatment, eliminated the Epicureans, robbed them of their central theme, and universalized the subject for all time. From this time onward the topic of friendship belongs no longer to Epicurean ethics, but to the broader field of Latin *humanitas*.

The *candor* of Vergil is specifically mentioned by Horace in *Sermones* 1.5.39-44:

'... Most welcome dawned the light of the following day, for Plotius, Varius, and Vergil met us at Sinuessa; old earth has never begotten whiter souls than these and none is more bound to them than I. What touching greetings, what exquisite joys were there! So long

⁵⁰See § 66.

⁵¹Diehl 12.

⁵²Atticus 4.1.

Compare 5.3.

⁵³Diehl 16.

⁵⁴Brutus 259.

⁵⁵1.141.

⁵⁶Brutus 292.

as I retain my senses, there is nothing I would compare to a congenial friend'.

In all the writings of Horace there is no more Epicurean passage than this. The last clause of the quotation is based upon a saying of the master: 'Of all the contributions that wisdom makes to the blessedness of the perfect life by far the greatest is the treasure of friendship'⁶⁶. Editors commonly take *candor* in the Horatian passage in the general sense, but the interpretation gains much if we recognize the mention of an Epicurean virtue. The word *candor* then signifies complete sincerity and frankness, saying what you mean and meaning what you say, the absence of all affectation, obsequiousness, flattery, and acquiescence⁶⁷.

Horace enlarges upon the topic of *candor*, or sincerity, toward the end of the *Ars Poetica*, especially in verses 420-452. This is a *locus classicus* on the topic of *assentatores*, or 'yes-men', who exclaim *pulchre, bene, recte!* His example of *candor* is Quintilius Varus, who used to say

'Correct this, if you please, and this.... If you preferred to defend your fault rather than mend it, he would waste no further word or idle pains. On the contrary you were at liberty to indulge your egotism at will and without a rival'.

Romans, however, were less interested in virtues than in their corresponding vices, and we may find this whole subject of flattery dilated to still greater dimensions in Juvenal (3.84-125), who draws many of his topics from Epicurus.

Of Vergil's *candor*, frankness, and suavity, we have other evidence than that of Horace. The *Eclogues* themselves, the first heir of his invention, combine to a remarkable degree the precious qualities of *amicitia*, *suavitas*, and *candor*. They are poems of friendship dedicated to Pollio, Alfenus Varus, and Cornelius Gallus. These are the very three by whom, we are told, he was reimbursed for his lost lands, and so the *Eclogues* are poems of gratitude as well as of friendship⁶⁸. They exemplify far better than the poems of Lucretius the *suavis amicitia* upon which that poet bestowed this gracious name. Vergil expresses the genuine delights of friendship without affectation, obsequiousness, or flattery. In his references to the young Caesar his suavity is enhanced in proportion as his criticisms of the confiscation system are severe. It must have required no ordinary courage in the first three years of the Triumvirate to proclaim the iniquity of this practice. Yet bitterness is lacking, and the cruellest truths are expressed with disarming sweetness.

Of Epicurean friendliness, *candor*, and agreeableness a suitable handmaid was the desire to diminish human misery by sympathy. The art of comforting is, to a certain degree, Epicurean. Nevertheless the founder placed a limitation upon this when he wrote, 'Let us sympathize with our friends, not by joining in their groans, but rationally'⁶⁹. To this injunction the procedure of Lucretius nicely and precisely conforms. Nothing could be more severely rational than his system of thought, but its purpose is the comfort of

mankind. He it was that invented that fine phrase, *solacia vitae*, 'life's solaces'⁷⁰. He longed to deliver mankind from the bondage of fear and superstition. He overflows with sympathy for human sorrows, but he cannot help them except through reason. Horace also has a comforting philosophy of life, but it, too, is rational. The faculty of reason must guide the feelings.

It was, of course, impossible for Vergil when he undertook a great, constructive epic, which was bound to conform to the common beliefs and aspirations of mankind, to reproduce the intellectual consolation offered by Lucretius. The impulse to comfort, however, at the same time inborn in him and nurtured by the philosophy of his choice, was not to be smothered, and his comfort is rational. In place of the rationalistic confidence in the supremacy of physical law he exploits an unshakable faith in the destiny of Rome. We have turned only a few pages of the *Aeneid* when we find Aeneas comforting his companions⁷¹:

'...From disaster to disaster, from peril to peril we struggle onward toward Latium, where the fates hold out the hope of peace and a permanent home; there it is heaven's will that the kingdom of Troy shall rise again'.

Turn another page and we find Jupiter comforting Venus by revealing to her the will of the fates and the happy outcome of painful wanderings⁷². Shortly afterwards we find Venus passing on the comfort to Aeneas, though she cannot refrain from teasing him⁷³. In Book 4 Aeneas is in no position to comfort Dido, though he longs to do so; in Book 6 it is equally impossible for him to comfort her⁷⁴. However, to collect all the comforting passages in the *Aeneid* would be useless. We mention further only the curious spectacle of Jupiter comforting Hercules when he weeps over the approaching death of Pallas⁷⁵, and the picture of Juturna bemoaning disconsolately the unhappy gift of immortality⁷⁶. Book 6 is, of course, the chief exponent of life's solaces. The revelation of the secrets of the future life and the honor roll of the unborn Rome are intended to be to Aeneas like the comforting revelation of the laws of the universe to Memmius. This knowledge is the prize of his high calling, liberating him from all the fears of failure and uncertainties of ignorance.

We arrive now at a profound contradiction in Vergil's philosophy. We have seen him drawn by nature and converted by instruction to the friendliest, kindest, and most sympathetic of Greek philosophies. This philosophy alone deemed happiness possible and alone was characterized by love of mankind. It taught men to despise the pranks of fortune and the favors of men. It called upon them to renounce the vanities of learning and to seek peace of mind through a wholesome control of the feelings. It called upon its adherents to renounce the quest of fame, power, and riches. Happiness was quite possible if man would only limit his desires and emancipate himself from dependence upon the whims of chance. In short, the will of man was

⁶⁶Gnomologium Vaticanum 13.

⁶⁷Cicero, *De Amicitia* 24-26.

⁶⁸Gnomologium Vaticanum 66.

⁶⁹Diehl 14.

⁷⁰5.21.

⁷¹Aeneid 1.198-207.

⁷²Aeneid 1.257-296.

⁷³Aeneid 1.387-401.

⁷⁴See especially 6.456-466.

⁷⁵10.467-473.

⁷⁶12.872-883.

The point is the impossibility of comfort.

free. The very atoms swerve from their course that man may be free⁶⁷. The very gods retire to a distance and leave to man the sacred privilege of self-determination. Such was the fond expectation of the poet when he wrote, 'We are setting sail for the happy havens, following the instruction of Siro, that great man, and we have ransomed life from every care'⁶⁸.

Yet this philosophy was only half true, as the fates soon revealed to him.

The will of man is not wholly free. The atoms may swerve from their course in the interests of *libera voluntas*, but Roman triumvirs do not. Vergil had enjoyed perhaps two years of tranquility when rumors of confiscation began to shatter his contentment. This distress was protracted because the fate of his lands was long undecided. In the end he was impoverished by the very party, the avengers of Julius, to whom his allegiance was logically due. For the moment he was like Aeneas himself, a man without a country, and an exile by fate. Thus the character of Aeneas is a projection of the poet himself. The one, like the other, has been robbed by fate of what he held most dear. The one, like the other, is compelled to enter upon a course of life that he had not chosen and never would have chosen. For neither the one nor the other was there such a thing as *libera voluntas*. Vergil, writing to Augustus that he seemed to have undertaken the Aeneid in a moment of mental aberration, is telling us that he labors against his will⁶⁹.

The problem of fate and free will was bound to raise its head in the Aeneid. It is omnipresent, but most pathetically so in Book 4. That the paths of Aeneas and Dido should cross each other seemed to be in every feature providential. The Carthaginian queen was in need of just such a protector as the Trojan hero, and he was in quest of such a kingdom as she had founded. Yet they could not be united. The very stars in their courses were fighting against Dido and not less against Aeneas. If the will of a common man is not free, still less is the will of a queen or a hero free. The very gods had surrendered their liberty, for the fates are supreme over Jupiter himself. The very core of Vergil's philosophy of life is expressed in the words of Aeneas, *Italiam non sponte sequor*, 'I am not seeking Italy of my own free will'⁷⁰. Neither was Vergil writing the Aeneid of his own free will. If ever it should be finished, he was hoping to return to his beloved study of philosophy⁷¹.

Yet we have not yet reached the deepest depths of this self-contradictory philosophy. The kindly poet, who has cultivated all the friendliness, candor, agreeableness, sympathy, and humility of the Epicureans, has been swamped by the cold determinism of rival systems of thought. All Greek thought, both popular and scholastic, with the exception of Epicureanism, either expressly or tacitly denies the freedom of the will. In Homer, Herodotus, and the drama alike the will of the gods or the decrees of fate are supreme. Thunder strikes the tall trees. The hero of tragedy is no hero unless he is struck down. Children are hostages to

fortune. Men are only balls for the gods to toss and catch. To the Stoics fate was supreme; man can at best submit gracefully. Virtue is the *summum bonum* and the greatest virtue is patience, to which Vergil himself accorded the highest place and special mention in Aeneid 5.709-710 (this is one of his comforting passages):

Nate dea, quo fata trahunt retrahuntque sequamur; quidquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est.

To this traditional determinism of Greek literature and Stoic philosophy was added in Vergil's day the blasting influence of Chaldean astrology, and to heap the measure came the Sibylline Prophecies. These three—Stoic determinism, astral determinism, and religious determinism—formed a ruthless triumvirate of thought, and threatened to override all the resistance of science and reason. Of at least two of the three—astrology and religion—the voice was prophecy, and the Aeneid became of necessity a prophetic poem. To the historian Livy the greatness of Rome is an accomplished fact, and Rome is already past the zenith of its glory; his great history is a magnificent epitaph. To Vergil the greatness of Rome is less a fact than a prediction. The Aeneid is in no sense an epitaph; it is rather a prospectus, the gospel of the new imperialism. If Augustus established the Empire firmly upon the earth, it was Vergil who established it firmly in the imagination of mankind. To him the Empire was the fulfilment of prophecy.

The Aeneid abounds in contradictions. Its prophetic form is nothing short of Oriental; it is a monument of Oriental determinism hardly less than the Bible. This is absolutely foreign to Rome. The Roman Republic was a product of political evolution, the birth of the unintended. It grew as naturally as the springtime her crown of verdure weaves. Oracles and prophecies play a minimum part in the history of the Republic; her citizens cherish no illusions about the white man's burden or a chosen race. Rome was never priest-ridden; she produced no theology; the glamor of imperialism failed to penetrate even the brilliant intellect of Cicero. Out of the Republic the Empire grew as naturally as the fruit follows the blossom, but it was launched by Vergil as a child of destiny in terms of Oriental determinism⁷². Caesar is described as a Hellenistic monarch, dispensing laws to willing peoples; he belongs in that category out of which the definite conception of the savior-king was particularized. Thus the Aeneid finds its nearest relative in the New Testament. The one was the gospel of the new imperialism, the other the gospel of the Kingdom of Christ. The Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Christ were launched upon the same world.

It is little wonder that Vergil became the prophet of the gentiles, and he deserved this title on other grounds than his description of the savior-child in the Messianic Eclogue. He knew the Christian virtues⁷³. The basis of the practical ethics of the Epicurean was love, just as love was the central teaching of Jesus. Both systems

⁷²For prophecy see Aeneid 1.257-296, *et passim*.

⁷³In this connection reference may be made to the paper by Mr. T. W. Valentine, *The Medieval Church and Vergil*, *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 25.65-67. C. K. >

⁶⁷De Finibus 1.19.

⁶⁸Catalepton 5.10.

⁶⁹Macrobius 1.24.11.

⁷⁰Aeneid 4.361.

⁷¹Diehl 16.

assumed the possibility of happiness, and both placed the secret of happiness in a wholesome exercise of natural feelings. Both poured scorn upon the vanities of wealth, fame, and power. Both movements set themselves in hostility to contemporary learning, Epicureanism to Plato and the Sophists, Christianity to the Scribes and the Pharisees. Both appealed to all classes, men, women, and children; both preached charity and developed communistic tendencies in their early history. If the history of Epicureanism were as well understood as the history of Stoicism, we might discover that there is more of Epicureanism than of Stoicism in the New Testament.

It is often said that Vergil gradually renounced his Epicureanism as the years went by, but this is a superficial judgment, though logical enough to those who think more of the thought of Lucretius than of his feelings. The great love of mankind which inspired that poet to consecrate his days and his nights to his precious verses remains with Vergil to the end. Of one grand conviction he is always sure, that tears for human tragedies are not lacking in this world and mortal misfortunes do touch the human heart⁷³. The very gods turn away their eyes with sorrow from human suffering⁷⁴. This is true to Epicurean ethics even if it is false to Epicurean theology. Neither did Vergil ever lose his *suavitas*, his sweetness of spirit. His tone is gayer in the Eclogues, mellow in the Georgics, and sadder in the Aeneid, but it is always sympathetic. He makes friends for himself even after these nineteen centuries. An unclouded *candor*, too, is always present. He faces the bitter facts of life with a pitiless directness. Those who have earned happiness do not always find it. Their very virtues are the causes of their ruin. The beauty and the prowess of Camilla invite her destruction. The love of Nisus for Euryalus destroys them both. It was through natural feelings that Dido went down to ruin, although she had abundantly earned her title to a happy life.

This Epicurean instinct to offer comfort and solace pervades the whole Aeneid, and is not unconnected with its defects. It awakened in the poet a livelier understanding of calamity and failure than of triumph and success. Almost all the finest passages of the Aeneid are tragic—the fall of Troy, the Dido episode, the friendship drama of Nisus and Euryalus, the Camilla idyll, and the death of Turnus. If Aeneas fails to satisfy us completely, it is partly for the reason that

he is inclined to pity himself. Heroes should arouse only admiration. It is the psychology of success that Vergil has not entirely mastered. This is particularly disappointing to our generation, because the success-motive has woven itself into our emotional complex. It is modern and American. Vergil's mind is modern in some respects, but certainly not in this. Here Vergil's mind is Oriental, Greek, Roman, and medieval. He is a vagrant soul; Dante did well to leave him in a borderland, neither in heaven nor in hell. There too belongs the kindly soul of Epicurus, who feared neither the wrath of gods nor the pain of death, and loved his fellowman.

VICTORIA COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

NORMAN W. DEWITT

MARTIAL 11.18

Donasti, Lupe, rus sub urbe nobis;
sed rus est mihi maius in fenestra.

Errasti, Lupe, littera sed una,
nam quo tempore praedium dedisti,
mallem tu mihi prandium dedisses.

The verses quoted above are the first two and the last three of a sprightly and amusing epigram of twenty-seven verses, in which Martial with comic exaggeration descants upon the diminutive size of a country place given him by Lupus, and ends with the suggestion that a 'feed' (*prandium*) would have been more acceptable than such a 'fee' (*praedium*).

The editors note that Martial may have derived his inspiration from a poem of six lines in the Greek Anthology (Jacobs. *Anthologia Graeca*³, 11.249), wherein is described a farm so small that, had he been acquainted with it, Epicurus would have developed everything out of farms (*ἀγρῶν*) rather than out of atoms (*ἀτόμων*).

The commentators seem to have missed the fact that Martial was anticipated by Cicero. Enumerating examples of hyperbole, Quintilian (8.6.73) makes this note: . . . Cicero in quodam ioculari libello <dicat>: Fundum Vetto vocat, quem possit mittere funda, ni tamen exciderit, qua cava funda patet.

These verses may be rendered as follows:

'What Vetto calls "farm" he could cast from a sling—
If it did not fall out the loose side of the thing!'

This couplet has all the essential features of the two poems above cited, including the word-play *fundum* . . . *funda*.

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⁷³Aeneid 1.462.

⁷⁴Aeneid 10.473.

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